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Résumé de l'article

Depuis nombre d'années déjà, l'enseignement de l'histoire a fait l'objet d'études diverses. On s'est préoccupé tantôt de la matière présentée, tantôt des méthodes utilisées, et on s'est surtout beaucoup interrogé sur la place que l'histoire occupe - ou devrait occuper - dans les programmes scolaires, particulièrement aux niveaux primaire et secondaire. Selon l'auteur, la tâche principale des planificateurs de programmes devrait être d'établir un ordre de priorités au sein des matières enseignées et il estime que le maintien d'une tradition ne devrait, d'aucune façon, constituer une raison suffisante pour garder une matière au programme.

A cet égard, le cas de l'histoire est compliqué du fait de son ethnocentrisme reconnu. De plus, de nombreuses questions se posent quant à la capacité des enfants du primaire de comprendre certains des aspects importants de l'histoire et, de même, l'histoire ne semble pas encore avoir de véritable raison d'être au niveau secondaire. L'auteur propose donc que l'enseignement de l'histoire soit abandonné au primaire et que l'on établisse sa raison d'être au secondaire en se basant sur les trois prémisses suivantes: l'histoire peut convenablement servir d'introduction à l'utilisation de témoignages ou d'évidences; la biographie peut contribuer à augmenter la conscience de l'individualité chez l'étudiant; le partage d'expériences constitue la base même de toute identité culturelle.

*History in Schools: Reflections on Curriculum Priorities**

DAVID PRATT

Generals are always fighting the last war, and educators are always instructing the last generation.

John Wilkinson

RETROSPECT FROM THE YEAR 2500

It may be because I was a student and a teacher of history for many years that I often speculate on what the educational historian of the year 2500 will have to say about schools of the 20th century. Let us assume that civilization has survived or has revived by the year 2500 and that there are in that society historians studying Canadian schools in the 1980s. What they discover, they will surely find interesting but bizarre. For example, they will find that, forty years after the first nuclear explosion placed human consciousness under a permanent mushroom cloud, there was no serious and systematic study in schools (and rarely even frivolous and unsystematic study) of nuclear weapons, the armaments industry, international relations, citizen participation in politics, peace studies or conflict resolution. They will observe that at the beginning of a long slide in declining expectation of life, presaged by escalating cancer rates among chemical workers and the presence in the body systems of all Canadians tested of DDT, PCBs, Heptachlor, epoxide and Dieldrin, there was little study of the economics of pollution, the politics of environmental protection, cell biology, public health or epidemiology. Our historians would also observe that, although a high proportion of premature deaths were incurred directly by accidents and heart attacks and indirectly by alcohol, tobacco, lack of exercise and poor nutrition, in the few cases where curricula were developed in CPR, first aid, traffic safety, smoking, physical fitness and nutrition, they were rarely successful and always despised as third-class subjects.

Physical survival is only one of many human needs that schools might be expected to address. In the area of aesthetics, there is widespread acceptance in schools of the myth that artistic skill is innate and untrainable; the arts are regarded as gratuitous luxuries and are accorded less than 5 per cent of total pupil time. In the social domain, schools operate on an individualistic and competitive mode that leaves many young people innocent of a social conscience and inhibited in their social relationships. And if we examine the contribution of schooling to the development of an existential sense of meaning, we confront evidence that it is school-age adolescents

* For conversations which were both enjoyable and illuminating in the development of this paper, I would particularly like to thank Bill Cann, Susanne Frost, Bob Hopwood, Des Morton, Jim Pritchard and Floyd Switzer.

who in the last three decades have experienced dramatically escalating rates of deliquency, alcoholism, drug dependency, religious cultism and suicide.

In light of these deficits, those subjects that did receive time and effort will also interest the historians: millions of student years and billions of dollars on instruction in "core French", the net result of which was a negative attitude by learners toward their own aptitude for languages; great pains taken by teachers and given to learners in mastering anachronistic curiosities such as sentence analysis and fractions. And, if the historians have access to detailed curricula or teaching records, they will observe a vast desert of other classroom events and activities that appear to have no purpose whatever.

Our historians will almost certainly conclude that Canadian schools in the 1980s had not rationalized their curriculum priorities. And, in case this paper survives until 2500, let me say that here is one educator who supports that conclusion. I believe it was R. H. Tawney who said that the language of priorities is the religion of socialism. Be that as it may, the language of priorities is the essence of curriculum. As Herbert Spencer put it more than a century ago: "Before there can be a rational curriculum . . . we must determine the relative value of knowledge."[1]

Children in the English-speaking world spend approximately fifteen thousand hours in school between entry and graduation. These fifteen thousand hours are distributed among various areas of learning, on the basis of a combination of tradition, educational myth, political pressure and institutional inertia. The primary question facing curriculum planners is: How do we move from this non-rational pattern to a rational scale of priorities to govern the use of those finite hours and years of young people's lives? It is against the background of this general question that I want to make the specific inquiry: Should the study of history be preserved in schools and, if so, for what reasons?

History has had a significant presence in the school curriculum for the past hundred years, but it no longer commands a wide basis of support, and its survival seems to depend primarily on protection by its political friends. "Understanding of Canadian history and geography" was ranked as first or second priority for high schools by only 3 per cent of a cross-section of Ontario citizens in 1982, compared with 63 per cent for "job training and career preparation" and 35 per cent for "basic reading, writing, and number skills".[2] Professional educators are also somewhat underwhelmed by the claims of history. A former president of the American Educational Research Association declared that "history has inherited the suffocating role of Latin in former times. It occupies a vast and numbing slice of the curriculum."[3] Not many school people would go that far; for most of them history is like an elderly

1. Herbert Spencer, *Essays on Education* (London, 1911, orig. 1860), p. 7.
2. D. W. Livingstone, D. J. Hart and L. D. McLean, *Public Attitudes Toward Education in Ontario 1982* (Toronto, 1983).
3. Michael Scriven, "Education for Survival", in K. Ryan and J.M. Cooper, eds., *Kaleidoscope: Readings in Education* (Boston, 1975), p. 134.

and half-forgotten relative. Any suggestion of compulsory euthanasia would be vociferously opposed. But, should he or she fade naturally from the scene, few tears would be shed and the funeral would be attended by a rather sparse collection of the immediate family.

I am suggesting that the study of history has not succeeded in persuading either the general public or professional educators of its importance, and for its long-term survival a convincing rationale needs to be articulated. In developing such a rationale, promoters of history labour under the burden that of all school subjects history has the most damaging record.

THE ONE DANGEROUS SUBJECT

Other subjects may be trivial, boring, discouraging, repugnant to fundamentalists, or even dysfunctional in certain limited respects, but only history, as normally taught in schools at least until the recent past, can be properly described as dangerous to the welfare of humanity. The simplest, although not the only illustration of this, is the ethnocentrism promulgated by history textbooks. Whenever the press reports another assault on a non-white immigrant in a Canadian city, it brings to mind a passage in a history textbook used in Ontario in the 1960s:

> In Britain, before the war, there was hardly any coloured population and therefore no problem. Of late, however, immigrants have begun to pour into Britain from Jamaica and elsewhere in the West Indies. They were used to a low standard of living and soon turned several areas of London and other cities into coloured slums. (*1960*)

Let me quote a few other passages from history texts published for and used in Canadian schools.

> A stagnant religion in many cases also helped to freeze the Asian world. . . . In many ways Asia must blame herself for her backwardness. (*1965*)
> The Jesuits fought bravely against the rude beliefs of the Indians. . . . Gentleness and kindness were signs of weakness to the savages. (*1965*)
> Champlain spent the winter with the Hurons, living in a longhouse swarming with Indians, mice, fleas, and lice. (*1962*)
> Slaves on the southern plantations were seldom badly treated. It was in their master's interest to keep them healthy and content. (*1960*)
> Extremists known as abolitionists demanded that slavery be ended everywhere. (*1967*)

And, finally, a quotation whose tenor is once again becoming familiar:

> Where they are not in power, communists also seek co-operation with other parties in demanding reforms, or in creating "communist front" organizations. The communist "peace" movement has been one of the most important of these. To the communists, "peace" can only mean in the long run the triumph of communist rule. (*1954*)

School history is in the dock, and the judge must decide between execution and rehabilitation. The defence argues that things have changed. The accused protests, "Don't worry about my past; my future is spotless." I recently completed a review of a sample of school history textbooks published in Canada between 1977 and 1980 and found that things have indeed changed.[4] First, they are much less evaluative. Whereas earlier texts flung such words as "savage" and "massacre" about with wild abandon, the recent texts use evaluative terms less than half as frequently. Second, they are much less negative. Whereas in the older textbooks, for example, two-thirds (65.4 per cent) of the expressed value judgments about Indians were unfavorable, in the recent texts two-thirds (62.4 per cent) are favorable.

The changes in textbooks over the past decade owe little to changes in the discipline and much to social trends and changes in public opinion. To discover the prevailing social and political philosophy, future historians will find history textbooks almost as valuable as "Dear Abby" columns. One further illustration of the political function of school texts is provided by their rehabilitation of Norman Bethune. A review of Ontario school texts showed that prior to 1967 Bethune was a non-person in Canadian school history; there was no mention of him in any of the scores of texts authorized for the study of the history and geography of Canada or China. Let us leave aside the question whether Bethune should be remembered and, if so, in what way, and merely record the perplexity of Canadian visitors to China when "greeted as 'countrymen of Norman Bethune,' because they had never heard of him".[5] In 1967, Bethune was mentioned in one sentence in a text used in grade 13. In 1971, diplomatic relations were established between Canada and China. Bethune's presence in school texts exactly paralleled the growing political, commercial, and tourist contact between Canada and China. By 1974 he had earned a brief mention in three texts; in 1975 a biography of Bethune was authorized for use in schools; and by 1979 he received mention, usually in one or two illustrated pages, in ten authorized texts.

I have dwelt at length on the shortcomings of textbooks because they bring into sharp focus the way in which school history reinforces contemporary or outdated political and social ideology. The more significant question is whether history in schools can tend to give pupils other than "a lethal inoculation of us-themism".[6] Skilled, sensitive, and scholarly teachers can no doubt use even biased textbooks to stimulate discussion of human differences and prejudices with a view to developing in their pupils greater insight, understanding and tolerance. Even if the schools had many more such teachers, questions still arise from the exposure of young people to the skeletons in humanity's closet. For Stephen Dedalus, "history is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake," echoing Marx's "the traditions of all dead generations weigh like a nightmare on the brains of the living." Can children and adolescents

4. David Pratt, "Bias in Textbooks: Progress and Problems", in R.J. Samuda, J. Berry and M. Laferriere, eds., *Multiculturalism in Canada: Social and Educational Implications* (Boston, 1983).
5. R. Stewart, *Bethune* (Toronto, 1973), p. 166.
6. David F. Kellum, *The Social Studies: Myths and Realities* (New York, 1969), p. 35.

study history without falling prey to the literary and motivational convention of conflict between them and us? Does rummaging through "the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind" make them better people? Can they ever love their fellow beings wholeheartedly once they have learned of Auschwitz, Drogheda, My Lai, Shabra and Smyrna?

This is not to say that the study of history necessarily nourishes prejudice nor that ignorance is therefore preferable to knowledge. It is simply to suggest that before we can make rational decisions about curriculum priorities we need to weigh both the costs and the benefits of each claimant to space in the curriculum.

HISTORY IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Although academic historians tend to think of school history mainly in terms of secondary school, it is worth their while to think about the teaching of history in elementary school and in the first years of junior high school (I shall use the term "elementary school" to refer to grades 1-8). One reason is that pupils in many provinces spend more time studying history at that level — typically two or three years as against one or two years in secondary school. Another reason is that it is the elementary school experience that establishes children's initial attitude toward the subject. The teaching of history at this level faces very formidable obstacles.

At the elementary school level, pupils will rarely be taught by a history specialist. Teachers cannot be blamed if, lacking much depth in the discipline, facing many different classes, and usually teaching more than one subject, they frequently fall back on the textbook-based, duplicated question-sheet, recitation approach to history. Children learn that history is the finished record of mainly political events, which, for no apparent reason, they are obliged to commit to memory. History specialists in secondary schools face an uphill battle in arousing interest in students coming from this elementary school background. One secondary teacher of my acquaintance has developed a historian-as-detective unit on Jack the Ripper that has the goal of detoxifying grade 9 students, impelling them for the first time to interact personally with historical evidence. Their previous experience, in his words, consists of "we're going to do history — get out your book.' What conclusion is the student to draw from that? — History is in the frigging book!"

Indoctrination into the sanctity of a single published source, which accompanies reliance on the textbook, seems to me fraught with chilling consequences. It is almost the obverse of the historical method, and presents university teachers with difficulties when confronting students whose idea of critical reading is to compare two newspapers that feed from the same wire services. But, more significantly, in an age in which information is power and disinformation is a major political strategy, schools would serve society best by nurturing not credulity but scepticism for the published record.

These generalizations clearly do not do justice to many imaginative and dedicated teachers nor to the valiant efforts of such bodies as the Canada Studies Foundation to

implement vibrant and meaningful history programs. But the organization of elementary schools and the selection, training, and allocation of teachers seem likely to maintain the general pattern that has persisted in the past.

The other factor that constrains the teaching of history in elementary schools is the level of intellectual development of preadolescent pupils. Forty years of developmental psychology pioneered by Piaget in Geneva have given us considerable insight into children's thinking but have had only limited impact on school curricula. For the child below the age of six or seven, history has little meaning other than as a collection of stories and unrelated events. The concept of chronological time has not yet developed; there is little discrimination between what happened five years ago and five hundred years ago. People are described in terms of physical attributes or global stereotypes (''nice'', ''very bad''), and explanation focuses on isolated or irrelevant factors.

During the years from about seven to twelve, the child's descriptions of other people become less stereotyped and evaluation of actions is dominated by circumstantial and descriptive comment. Explanation of events clings to a single cause, and what happened in the past is viewed as inevitable. Time concepts are undeveloped. Children who are asked such questions as ''Robin Hood lived in 1187 — would your grandmother be alive then?'' are likely to answer wrongly before the age of nine. Before the age of eleven or twelve, few children are able to deal in possibilities, to grasp simile and metaphor, to handle multiple variable interactions, to think about thinking, or to comprehend concepts of space or time beyond their immediate experience, such as a thousand miles or a century.[7] Even at thirteen years, half the children in one study still believed that putting the clock forward in the spring made them older.[8] Complaints that schools are not teaching children at this age what it means to be ''Canadian'', and efforts made to remedy this supposed deficiency by massive doses of Canadian history, are misplaced, because the child cannot yet understand the highly abstract concept of nationhood.[9] The evidence of numerous studies suggests that, while educators can facilitate children's progress through the stages of intellectual development, the process cannot be radically accelerated.[10]

With respect to historical studies, the most significant stage in the Piagetian model of intellectual development is the stage of ''formal operations'', usually beginning during adolescence, at which the individual becomes capable of logical and abstract thought. This is not a sudden or universal development; preadolescent children reason abstractly some of the time, and post-adolescents do not do so all of the time. It

7. David Elkind, ''Adolescent Thinking and the Curriculum'', *Education Digest,* 47 (September 1981).
8. R. N. Hallam, ''Piaget and Thinking in History'', in Martin Ballard, ed., *New Movements in the Study and Teaching of History* (Bloomington, 1970).
9. Barbel Inhelder and Jean Piaget, *The Growth of Logical Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence* (New York, 1958).
10. Gustav Jahoda, ''Children's Concepts of Time and History'', *Educational Review,* 15 (1963).

is not necessary to subscribe fully to developmental theory to perceive the commonsense implications for the teaching of history. Peel reports that "explanatory judgments, invoking ideas, seem to be associated . . . with mental ages of 176 months. . . . Not before the age of 15 can we expect to obtain systematic and coherent deductive argument. . . . We can expect the capacity to imagine possibilities in the minority only before the ages 13-15."[11] The ability to consider multiple causation rarely develops before adolescence, and only at that stage can the student become "concerned not only with what was but with what might have been and what might still be".[12]

One of the most serious and sustained attempts to develop historical thinking was conducted in British secondary schools under the aegis of the Schools Council. What this experiment showed was that it takes major changes in curriculum and instruction to develop in thirteen-to-sixteen-year-olds a degree of mature historical thinking, in terms of evidence, explanation, analysis, problem solving, judgment, and personal relevance. Even with this group, mature thought does not develop in all pupils and depends heavily on the pupil's level of literacy. Conventional history courses with this age group appear to do little for historical thinking:

> People in the past are seen as little more than modern men in fancy dress while all oddities in beliefs and practices are attributed to moral and intellectual inferiority. . . . The ancient Egyptians persisted with bizarre and inefficacious medical remedies because, as one boy put it, "They were closer to the monkeys in them days weren't they sir?"[13]

The implications of these findings for elementary school history seem to be clear. What is of main importance in history is the skills of handling evidence and the abstract concepts. The names, dates, places and events are pegs on which to hang arguments and concepts concerning human ideas and motivation, conflict and synergy, justice and freedom. In the consideration of such concepts, students develop their capacity to speculate, to integrate disparate information, to argue by deduction and to make balanced judgments. Prior to the age of thirteen to sixteen, children will probably learn only the pegs. They will dutifully commit to memory the names, dates and places. They will produce beautifully illustrated projects on Indian masks or the War of 1812. They will achieve "A" grades on tests requiring recall of information. In some cases they will develop a liking for the teacher and enthusiasm for the activities. But they will not achieve most of the abstract goals and intellectual skills that are important.

This is a fairly brutal but, I believe, an accurate account of some of the problems of history teaching in elementary schools. Curriculum planners must not only identify priorities but must also ascertain the most appropriate stage for the introduction and

11. E.A. Peel, *The Nature of Adolescent Judgment* (New York, 1971), pp. 46, 93 and 151.
12. Martin E. Sleeper, "A Developmental Framework for History Education in Adolescence", *School Review*, 84 (1975), p. 103.
13. Denis Shemilt, *History 13-16: Evaluation Study* (Edinburgh, 1980), p. 78.

pursuit of areas of learning. There is no shortage of subjects that are highly appropriate for elementary-school-age children — microcomputers are a recent and significant addition to the list.[14] It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the preadolescent years are an inappropriate stage for the teaching of history and that, at this level, the costs probably outweigh the benefits. Because one of these costs is a negative attitude toward the subject, it would be fitting for historians to throw their weight behind the removal of history teaching from the elementary school curriculum.

HISTORY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The uniformity of history teaching in elementary schools is due in part to the fact that it is a required subject with a captive audience. Secondary school history teaching also appears to have been relatively uniform in Canada until the 1960s, when most jurisdictions began to introduce a greater degree of choice into curriculum requirements. At that time my work took me into many secondary school history classrooms, and it was my observation that the increased freedom of choice by students was the best thing that ever happened to school history teaching. In some schools, history almost disappeared as emancipated students fled from dry-as-dust history courses. I sat through one such senior history class during that period which is still memorable for its excruciating boredom. The teacher was working through the details of the "Constitutional Crisis" of 1926, an episode whose enduring significance still escapes me. I can vividly recall the glazed eyes of the students and their attitudes of debility and despair. I doubt that many of them pursued history at university. The justification often given for this kind of teaching was its academic rigor, but the only rigor apparent was rigor mortis. Geoffrey Barraclough's comment on Tory history comes to mind:

> Do not suppose for one moment that this relentless pursuit of worn-out controversies and avoidance of anything that smacks of present preoccupations is accidental. . . . We shall never understand Tory historiography unless we realise that it is . . . an integral part of a strategy for emasculating history and rendering it harmless.[15]

But Tory political history was on the ebb in the 1960s, and in many schools teachers seized the challenge of attracting a non-captive audience to make the subject interesting and meaningful to the learners. In the process, many teachers found themselves using multiple sources, engaging with their pupils in in-depth research of specific events rather than in superficial surveys of national history, teaching with verve and imagination, and developing infectious enthusiasm for the subject. These developments are now severely threatened by the return to a more prescriptive curriculum which is taking place in many provinces, as well as by budgetary constraints and retention and allocation of teachers by seniority rather than competence.

14. Seymour Papert, *Mindstorms: Children, Computers, and Powerful Ideas* (New York, 1980).
15. Geoffrey Barraclough, review of John Kenyon, *The History Men* (Weidenfeld, 1983) in *The Guardian Weekly*, 17 April 1983, p. 22.

History teaching at the secondary level is highly diverse, but if it has a common weakness, it is the lack of a coherent and convincing rationale. Without a clear rationale, history classes tend to consist of a promiscuous blend of political narrative, endless and aimless "projects", desultory discussions of current events, and "guided tours through the historical dustbin".[16] Some teachers have certainly thought through the reasons for teaching the subject and arrived at conclusions persuasive to themselves and their pupils. I believe they are exceptions. During the five years when I was involved specifically in the education of beginning history teachers, most of whom were honours graduates in history, I found only one who, on entry to the teacher education program, could provide a reasoned and articulate rationale for teaching the subject in schools. As it happened, that one was a graduate in English. The best the several hundred others could provide were clichés and unsupported assertions. This was no doubt related to the fact that scarcely any of them had taken any work in the philosophy of history. The reasons for teaching and studying history are confused, not only among teachers but also in many official curriculum documents, and not least in the minds of school students. So long as this confusion persists, it is difficult to determine either what kind of history or how much history should be taught in schools.

I want to suggest three basic reasons that justify history not only as an elective but as a required subject in secondary school; at the same time, I doubt whether it is possible to justify making more than one year of history compulsory at the secondary level. That much is justified on grounds articulated by White: until there has been some exposure to the subject, students are not in a position to know whether they have an interest in or an aptitude for it.[17] The futility of attempting to teach content in the absence of learner motivation has been indicated by a mass of psychological evidence and philosophical argument going back to Plato: "For the free man there should be no element of slavery in learning. Enforced exercise does no harm to the body, but enforced learning will not stay in the mind."[18] I am therefore assuming one year of required history at or above the grade 9 level, followed by a variable number of elective history courses.

EVIDENCE

Only a minority of high school students will proceed to university, and an even smaller number will take university history courses. The rationale for most secondary school history must therefore address itself to the needs of learners for whom this may be their only exposure to the discipline. For such learners, history, effectively taught, can have enormous value as an introduction to the use of evidence. We know that adolescent students can, through the vehicle of history, acquire significant conceptual frameworks and analytical skills related to the use of evidence. Historical studies enable them to understand that knowledge is grounded in reason, that events require

16. H.G. Vonk, "Education and the 27-year Countdown", *Phi Delta Kappan*, 54 (1973), p. 514.
17. J.P. White, *Towards a Compulsory Curriculum* (London, 1973).
18. Plato, *The Republic*, ed. F.M. Cornford (London, 1941), p. 252.

both description and explanation, that evidence is not the same as assertion, that there are multiple criteria for evaluating evidence, that written records do not constitute irrefutable evidence, that temporal sequence is not evidence for causation, and that causation may be multiple and reciprocal.

While history provides an initiation, it does not constitute a complete education in the use of evidence. History is the ideal introduction because its methods and concepts are relatively accessible to the non-specialist. Historical thought is part of our culture, its methods are substantially commonsense methods, and its language is uniquely non-technical and jargon-free. But the study of history does not necessarily entail many specialized approaches to evidence (although it may make use of them), such as experimental methods, quantitative measurement and probabilistic inference, logical and epistemological analysis, or the evidentiary criteria of jurisprudence. The high school or university graduate who has only a historical training in evidence is as undereducated as the graduate who lacks historical training.

History teachers who define their mission in relation to developing concepts and skills in the use of evidence have superb opportunities in the field of history. For several years I have participated in classrooms from grade 9 to graduate school in which students have been studying political assassinations in the United States. I am amazed at the degree of interest these events arouse in students of all ages, and the essence of their interest is the question of evidence. And here indeed we have classic detective themes, complete with official reports that misrepresent testimony, crucial documents destroyed or concealed, photographs and material evidence apparently fabricated or altered, witnesses meeting sudden and violent death. Students can usually be guaranteed to forget that they are learning a great deal about evidence, and are conscious only of the intrinsic interest of the historical issue.

BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY

I want to revive an argument for the place of biography in the teaching of school history which will appear to many historians to have lost intellectual respectability by about the year 1900. I am influenced in part by recent work on the philosophy of the social sciences, notably by Hollis, who maintains that the search for causes of behaviour by the social sciences develops a model of "plastic man", entirely the creature of forces outside his volition. This is in contrast to "autonomous man", whose actions are freely and rationally determined: "where Plastic Man has his causes, Autonomous Man has his reasons."[19] Let me avoid joining the debate whether or not history is a social science, and suggest simply that there is ample space in school history for the study of historical events as determined in part by the actions, decisions and choices of individuals. This is an antidote to paranoid or escapist beliefs that freedom of choice is an illusion. Such beliefs may be encouraged by teachers and textbooks that seek to describe what happened and why. Students who study the past as causally determined are left little ground for believing that the future will not be

19. Martin Hollis, *Models of Man: Philosophical Thoughts on Social Action* (Cambridge, 1977).

similarly determined. An alarming contemporary manifestation of historical determinism is the growing number of people who appear to believe that nuclear war is inevitable.

Stephen Duguid, who teaches history in a penitentiary in British Columbia, describes how his students generally approach history deterministically, believing that they are the helpless victims either of overpowering economic forces or of powerful and exploitive individuals:

> The study of history serves to put the uniqueness of one's personal experience into proper perspective and demonstrates continuously the consequences of human action. . . . It is about people taking action to change or preserve the conditions under which they live.[20]

"I am not one person, I am many people," says a character in one of Virginia Woolf's novels. Our minds are populated by everyone we have known and learned about. The range of personalities familiar to us determines in part the development of those qualities that Isaiah Berlin associates with the study of history: "a capacity for insight, responsiveness, understanding of what men are and can be, of their inner lives . . . the psychological gifts required for imaginative reconstruction of forms of life".[21] In teaching history to adolescents, many teachers would concur with Barbara Tuchman's description of biography as "the prism of history", attracting and holding the student's interest in the wider subject and encompassing the universal in the particular.[22] History can present adolescents with the extremes of behaviour, as well as the commonplace. School history has almost always been the history of the political élite. But there is merit in having students develop the capacity to identify with ordinary people in the past with whom they share many of the same problems, difficulties, aspirations and achievements. We need a Fernand Braudel to write history textbooks, or even an E. P. Thompson, "seeking to rescue the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the 'obsolete' hand-loom weaver, the 'utopian' artisan . . . from the enormous condescension of posterity".[23]

At the same time, the attempt to gain insight into the character and actions of Garibaldi or Gandhi is also educative in the widest sense. Tell me whom you admire and I will tell you who you are. Adolescents develop a taste for heroes, and there is no reason why its objects should be limited to sports and movie stars. Canada has produced its fair share of extraordinary people. Unfortunately, school history often ignores them or reduces them to stereotypes. I once analyzed the treatment of John A. Macdonald in school history texts and found that 95 per cent of the value judgments made by authors were positive and that Macdonald and alcohol were never

20. Stephen Duguid, "History and Moral Education in Correctional Education", *Canadian Journal of Education,* 4 (1979), p. 89.
21. Isaiah Berlin, *Vico and Herder: Two Studies in the History of Ideas* (London, 1976), p. xxvii.
22. Barbara W. Tuchman, *Practicing History* (New York, 1981), p. 80.
23. Edward P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1963), p. 12.

juxtaposed.[24] This is Sunday School history at its worst. Ignoring Macdonald's frailties deprives him of human dimension and impoverishes his appeal. If adolescents are to have heroes, they need not heroes without limitations but those who transcend their limitations. Heroic history is not to be discounted as a factor in human conduct. In an interview with Theodore White a week after her husband's death, Jacqueline Kennedy said:

> History made Jack what he was . . . this little boy sick so much of the time, reading in bed, reading history . . . for Jack, history was full of heroes . . . Jack had this hero idea of history, the idealistic view.[25]

Biographical history is no longer the mainstream of historical scholarship. But the purposes of historical scholarship and school history teaching are different, as are their audiences. It may be that the evolution of historiography has to be repeated in each individual's intellectual development, that history taught to the young must be pre-Rankean because their thought is pre-Rankean. The writing of history began as myth, developed as epic, and moved through biography to its contemporary complexity. Kieran Egan has developed a thought-provoking model of intellectual development as an alternative to classical Piagetian theory. His model involves four stages: the Mythic stage (age four to ten), the Romantic stage (age eight to fifteen), the Philosophic stage (age fourteen to twenty), and the Ironic stage (nineteen through adulthood).[26] This model, which has at least intuitive appeal, implies that in the early years of secondary school we should encourage, rather than bypass, students' romantic interest in historical individuals, in the particular and the unique, in the far away and long ago. History provides an unlimited array of personalities against whom adolescents can test and explore their own identity, aspirations, and concept of human choice — in a word, their humanity.

SHARED EXPERIENCE

The major function of history teaching is usually thought of in terms of knowledge and understanding. While knowledge provides the infrastructure necessary to the pursuit of any discipline, history offers the possibility of going beyond knowledge to the provision of intrinsically valuable experiences.

Western education is overwhelmingly instrumentalist. Schools are seen as essentially preparatory, teaching knowledge and skills that will subsequently prove useful to the clients. But there is another tradition in schooling. It goes back to Aristotle, who recognized that the ends of life, and hence of education, are not instrumental actions but experiences that are directly satisfying or rewarding.

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24. David Pratt, "The Social Role of School Textbooks in Canada", in Elia Zureik and Robert M. Pike, eds., *Socialization and Values in Canadian Society, Vol. 1: Political Socialization* (Toronto, 1975).
25. Theodore H. White, *In Search of History* (New York, 1978), p. 679.
26. Kieran Egan, *Educational Development* (New York, 1979).

Experiences may be realized at three different levels: direct, simulated or vicarious. To the imaginative teacher, history is a goldmine for experiences at each level. It is possible to give students the direct experience of travel to and visiting historic sites, being present at significant events, sharing in genuinely exciting historical investigation. Simulated experiences can be contrived by reconstructing historical events, the most elaborate example being the growing leisure activity in Europe and the United States of recreating historical battles. But it is vicarious experiences that history offers in greatest abundance. A vicarious experience differs from knowledge in that the individual enters imaginatively into the experience that is presented through some such medium as writing, speech or film. In so doing, these experiences become an extension of the individual's own memory. History taught in this way is alive; taught as information, it is a postmortem.

We do not "own" information, but we own our experiences, and these experiences, which give us our identity, are by their nature historical. What Henry Kissinger said of nations is also true of individuals: they exist in time rather than in space.[27] Adolescents need affirmation of their individuality, and history teachers can support them by encouraging their students to engage in autobiographical research. These individual experiences can be extended by having students interview parents and grandparents and build a picture of their place within a unique family history.

Experiences are the building blocks of personality and the mortar of human relationships. When strangers meet, they seek to discover not common knowledge but shared experiences. "Have you read *Sophie's Choice?*" is an invitation to share an experience, not a body of information — a point forgotten by English curricula that treat literature merely as a form of communication. The essential function of initiation rituals, from boot camp to Ph.D. orals, is to bond members of the group through a common and distinctive experience. Just as a family achieves identity and coherence through its collective experience, so does a community and a nation. For Jung, consciousness of this collective experience was as significant in therapy as was understanding of personal experience to Freud.

In Canada, many of the vicarious cultural experiences of children are American experiences. No one can associate long with young children without recognizing that "the President" is a more salient figure than "the Prime Minister". The experiences provided by the twenty hours a week of television watched by Canadian adults, the thirty hours a week by children, are those of America in the Civil War, the Depression, Vietnam. This is the way to reproduce American culture in Canada, to develop cultural colonialism and alienation.

It cannot be healthy to live imaginatively more in the experiences of your cousins' family than in the history of your own. But this will be the outcome of any history that stresses "political significance" from a geopolitical or even a North American point of view as the only criterion for curriculum content. The Halifax Harbour Explosion, the

27. David F. Trask, "A Reflection on Historians and Policymakers", *The History Teacher*, 11 (1977).

Winnipeg General Strike, the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, the Dieppe Raid, the Group of Seven — these are significant, not because of their influence on subsequent events but because they are part of the unique collective experience that Canadians share. Induction into such experience is a valuable means of widening the sense of "belonging", which Abraham Maslow identified as an instinctive human need.

A program that operates in a Winnipeg high school illustrates the experiential approach to history. Each year around Remembrance Day veterans are invited to the school and are interviewed by students in the grade 11 twentieth-century history program. For the students this is an unforgettable experience. They discover that, for the soldier, war is not strategy or politics, but route marches, boredom, poor food, wounds and prison camp, and that the worst event is the death of a close friend, the best is coming home. There is an immediacy in conversation with another person reliving a particular experience:

> One of the men near him laughed at the thought of those bombs falling on the Germans. Suddenly, the whistling of falling bombs, explosions, and men screaming could be heard all around. They all scrambled, every man for himself. Dave dived under some kind of vehicle. After it was all over, Dave went back to find a bomb crater exactly where he had been digging his foxhole. They had been bombed by their own planes. . . .[28]

The project does not aim to provide useful knowledge or skills. What it does for learners is to develop an experiential dimension of consciousness of the past.

THE FUTURE OF SCHOOL HISTORY

I have for some years been formulating a new explanatory law of education. We might call this the Home Goal Law of Education, after the soccer term adopted by troops in Northern Ireland to describe bombers who accidentally blow themselves up. This law will account for programs that achieve the reverse of their intended effects: mathematics courses that weaken students' confidence in their mathematical ability, language programs that leave students with a distaste for other linguistic groups, English teaching that gives students an aversion to literature, science instruction that convinces students that the natural world is incomprehensible, and schooling as a whole that gives at least some students a lifelong distrust of education.

And what of history? Ethnocentrism, credulity and belief in the impotence of individuals to affect events are never intended outcomes. Nor is historicism. Yet those who aver that "history teaches us . . ." and "history shows . . .", those who sought "to avoid Munich by fighting in the rice paddies of Viet Nam"[29] — almost all such misusers and abusers of historical arguments are the products of school history courses.

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28. William Cann, *Sturgeon Creek Remembers* (mimeo) (Winnipeg, Sturgeon Creek Regional Secondary School, 1982).
29. Peter N. Stearns, "Cleo contra Cassandra", *The History Teacher*, 11 (1977), p. 23.

I am convinced that the best remedy lies in better preparation of history teachers, who are the gatekeepers of the subject in the schools. It is true that at present few history graduates can expect to find work as history specialists in secondary schools. This will begin to change within five years, as demographic factors affecting both school enrolments and teacher retirements create a vigorous demand for new teachers. By the end of this decade, many undergraduates in university history courses will again be intending to teach history in schools. I would urge that they be impelled to pay more attention to the philosophy of history than has been common in the past. It is not appropriate or feasible for teacher education programs to repair deficiencies in this area. It is highly appropriate for undergraduates to think at length about the purposes, potential and limitations of historical education, in the company of scholars and in the context of the academic study of history. Without such emphasis, history may survive in the schools, but for invalid reasons and with questionable results. Its full promise will be realized only by a generation of teachers who know both what they are doing, and why. The emergence of such teachers is the surest antidote to the demise of history as a school subject. When all is said, history is a reflective subject, and there is too much triviality and too little reflection in the school curriculum. The passing of history from schools would be regrettable, because to reflect on the past of humanity is necessarily to reflect on the nature and destiny of humanity.